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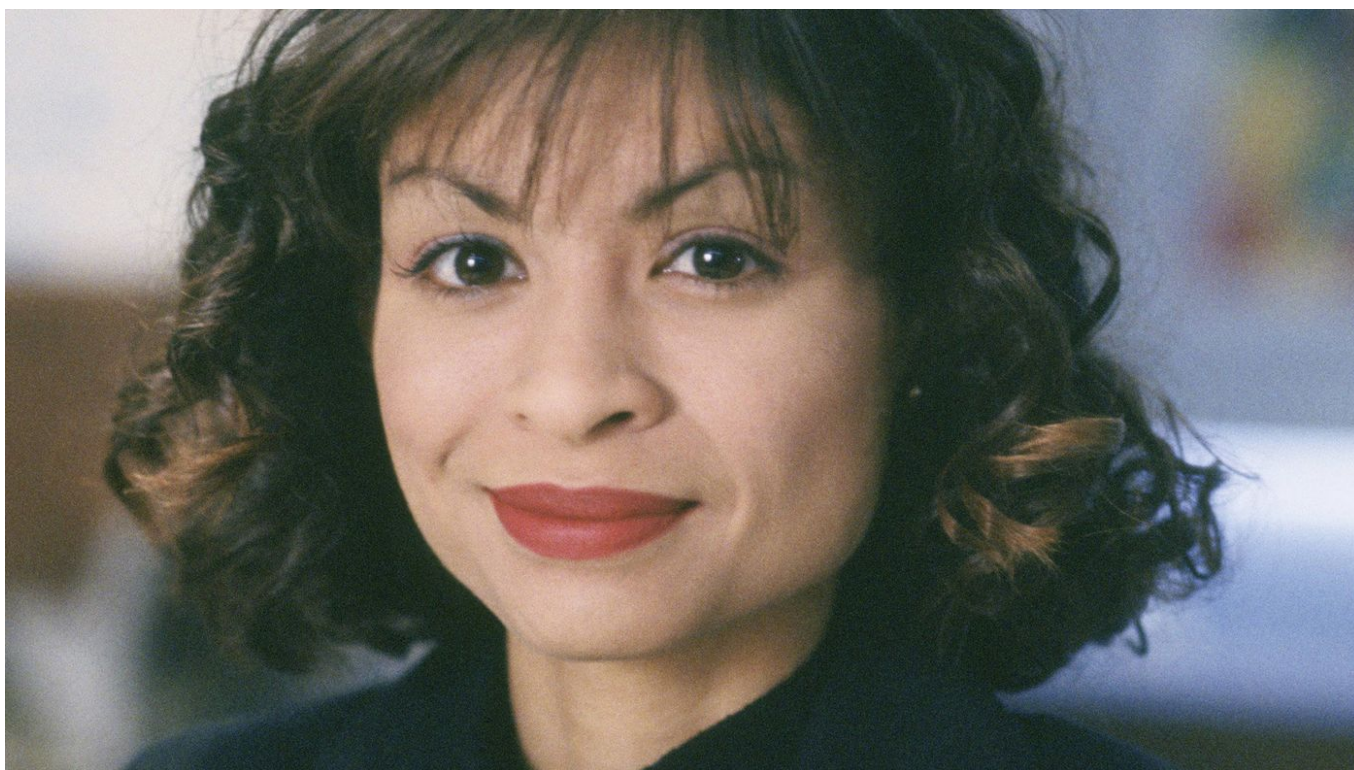
L.A. NOW

LOCAL

# 'ER' actress Vanessa Marquez shot and killed by South Pasadena police during wellness check at home



By HANNAH FRY and LAURA NEWBERRY  
AUG 31, 2018 | 2:35 PM



Vanessa Marquez as Nurse Wendy Goldman on a 1995 episode of "ER." (Alice S. Hall / NBCU Photo Bank)



South Pasadena police were called to the apartment of "ER" actress Vanessa Marquez on Thursday afternoon at the request of her landlord, who was concerned about her welfare.

Less than two hours later, 49-year-old Marquez was dead at the hands of the officers, who said she had

brandished what turned out to be a BB gun at them.

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Her death is now being investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

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When officers arrived at her apartment in the 1100 block of Fremont Avenue, Marquez was having a seizure, according to Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Lt. Joe Mendoza.

Officers and a county mental health clinician spoke with Marquez for more than 90 minutes in an effort to persuade her to accept medical help. Police said she was "uncooperative," may have been suffering from mental health issues and appeared to be unable to care for herself.

While they were talking, Marquez grabbed what officers thought was a semiautomatic handgun and pointed it at them, Mendoza said.

Two officers fired at her, striking her at least once in the torso, Mendoza said. Marquez was taken to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

The officers retrieved a weapon after the shooting and determined it was a BB gun that resembled a pistol, Mendoza said.

Marquez was best known for her recurring role as nurse Wendy Goldman on the popular medical drama "ER," which ran for 15 seasons until 2009. Marquez appeared on the show from 1994 to 1997. She also starred as student Ana Delgado in the 1988 film "Stand and Deliver," which told the story of East Los Angeles math teacher Jaime Escalante.

It's the character of Delgado that Highland Park resident Garrett Rowland best remembers Marquez for as an actress. Rowland, who spent years as a substitute English teacher in East Los Angeles, would often show the film to students.

Rowland saw the massive police presence on Fremont Avenue on Thursday afternoon, but made it a point to walk past the house on Friday morning when he realized who had died.

"I guess it shows that you never know what's going on with your neighbors behind closed doors," he said.

In recent years, Marquez used social media to reference her struggles with celiac disease and seizures. She wrote on Facebook in March that she was “terminally ill.”

Marquez in 2005 starred in an episode on the first season of the reality television show “Intervention,” which delved into how a compulsive shopping addiction created financial problems for the actress, according to a synopsis of the episode on Amazon.

She grabbed headlines last year when she accused her “ER” co-star George Clooney of helping to blacklist her from the series. In her Twitter account, which has since been deactivated, Marquez called out Clooney for condemning Harvey Weinstein and the many sexual allegations against the filmmaker, E! news reported in October. Marquez claimed Clooney had derailed her career when she spoke out about such harassment on the set of “ER.”

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Clooney is filming on location in Europe and could not be reached for comment on Friday. He has publicly denied the allegations.

John Levey, the casting director for “ER,” said he remembers Marquez as part of the talented group of individuals who acted as a foundation for the series.

“That group was a trampoline that allowed the stars of the show to jump higher,” he said. “She was very much a part of that early success. It’s hard to believe this would be her end.”

Toni McGhee, a friend of Marquez, wrote in a statement that she often told the actress that she believed her health problems stemmed from the loss of her career, which she said broke her spirit.

McGhee said that Marquez had issues with her landlord and the actresses’ final days were filled with the constant fear of being evicted.

“She told me she wouldn’t mind passing away at home and haunting the beautiful building she lived in as she was in love with where she lived ...” McGhee wrote.

On Friday, handymen bustled around the five-unit South Pasadena property where Marquez lived, making repairs to the entrance and along the stairwell leading to her upstairs apartment.

A vase full of light purple-and-white silk flowers remained in front of a shattered window in the entryway. Several bullets had pierced the drywall.

A man who identified himself as Marquez’s landlord declined to comment to reporters at the scene.

The shooting left neighbors on Fremont Avenue — a quiet, tony street lined with Craftsman-style homes — on edge.

Justin Ko, who lives a few doors down the street from Marquez, said he moved from Koreatown a year ago after a violent incident in his neighborhood led to massive police presence.

“It shocked us,” he said of Thursday’s shooting. “This is a safe area.”

The names of the officers involved in the shooting have not been released.

A similar incident with South Pasadena police occurred in June 2017, when authorities said 41-year-old Marco Cardoza pointed what appeared to be a handgun at officers who were attempting to serve a warrant at his Burbank home. Multiple officers fired their weapons at Cardoza, who was pronounced dead at the scene. Detectives later learned that the man’s pistol was a replica.

**2:35 p.m.:** This article was updated with more comments from neighbors and people who had worked with Marquez.

**12:15 p.m.:** This article was updated with details from Marquez’s neighborhood.

**1:40 p.m.:** This article was updated from comments from ER’s casting director, a friend of Marquez, and neighbors.

*This article was originally published at 9:30 a.m.*

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Hannah Fry



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Hannah Fry is a Metro reporter covering breaking news in California. She joined Times Community News in Orange County in 2013 where she covered education, Newport Beach city hall, crime and courts. She is a native of Orange County and attended Chapman University, where she was the editor-in-chief of the college newspaper, the Panther.

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